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Reports Conflict

Missiles, missiles, who's got the missiles?

The Defense Department and the Central Intelligence Agency agree that the Soviets have a lot of them. However, the question is what the Russians are doing with them.

In recent weeks, the Defense Department has said its intelligence sources have detected 60 new missile silos in the Soviet Union which may be intended for huge new SS9 missiles. Many Defense Department officials have stated the Russians may be deploying these huge missiles in an attempt to obtain a "first-strike capability" against the U.S. Consequently, these officials have suggested the U.S. might have to spend many more millions of dollars on its own missile defenses to counter the "new Russian threat."

However, it was reported earlier this week that the Central Intelligence Agency has concluded at least two thirds of the large new silo holes detected in the Soviet Union are intended for relatively small SS11 missiles. Rather than trying to obtain a first-strike capability, CIA officials said the Soviets may be following the American course of trying to protect its own missiles against attack with hardened silos.

The Defense Department bounced back from this CIA analysis with a statement to the effect that the 60 new silos may be intended for two new types of missiles instead of just one as they suggested earlier. However, they said there is still some "uncertainty" about this and said the CIA appraisal could not be ruled out.

The conflicting intelligence reports given by the Defense Department and the CIA make one wonder which agency is right, if either is. It also makes one wonder if intelligence reports some times are interpreted according to the needs of a given department or agency. The conflict between the Department of Defense and the CIA would be humorous—except for one thing. U.S. strategy at the important Strategic Arms Limitations Talks and multi-million-dollar-defense-spending decisions are being weighed, to a large extent, on the reports given by the two groups.

Summary: Conflicting intelligence reports on new Soviet missile silos by the Department of Defense and the Central Intelligence Agency have reduced the credibility of the nation's intelligence system.